

**Q:** Good afternoon. Today is February 1st, 2018. My name is Helene Tischler. I'm here at the Newton City Hall Law Library with Mr. Bruce Hambro. Together we're participating in the Newton Talks Oral History Project that's being conducted with the Newton Free Library, Historic Newton, and the Newton Senior Center. Thank you so much for being here. Now I know you've been a longtime resident, can you tell us where you're from originally, how you came to live in Newton?

**A:** Well, I was born in Wellesley Hospital in 1949. I'm 68 and proud to be born and bred in Newton. I went to Ward's Elementary School, Bigelow Junior High School, Newton North - Class of '67. And I moved away in 1983 but I continue to be very invested in Newton. I live right near, nearby so I do all my shopping and see all my friends in Newton, so even though I live in Waltham I'm just over the border.

**Q:** Ah okay, so why did you leave in '83? And where did you go?

**A:** Well '83 -- I moved to an apartment and then I got married. In 1987 I was on the committee -- 20th high school reunion committee. I had never been married before, I was 38 and I met a woman there from my high school class and we got married. And we then moved to San Francisco in 1989 and long story short we lived there and then moved to Washington D.C. after a while and then got divorced. She moved back to California, I moved back to Boston in 2001 and moved back to -- it just happened -- long story short I moved back to this complex in Waltham which is very convenient. I mean I wish I was living in Newton but I'm so close.

**Q:** Well your heart is in Newton.

**A:** My heart is in Newton.

**Q:** What village or neighborhood did you grow up in? What was it called?

**A:** Cotton Street is in the apex of Newton Corner, Newton Center, and Chestnut Hill, it's like in the middle. So Cotton Street has the Ward School which is like Chestnut Hill. But if you go to the end of Cotton Street and Centre Street you're at the oldest cemetery in Newton, the Newton cemetery across from Boston College -- what was Boston College Law School before it was Boston College Law School was that Catholic girls school I can't...anyway. Sacred Heart. Sacred Heart College.

**Q:** Oh, okay. And there was Mount Alvernia and it's still there. They're still there.

**A:** So I -- every school that I walked to, Ward School, Bigelow, and Newton High School where equidistant. Each school was about a 25-30 minute walk. Well, Ward was a little closer.

**Q:** Yes. Yes, it sounds like it.

**A:** Go to Chestnut Hill for Ward, go down to Newton Corner for Bigelow and I go to Newtonville for Newton High School. So it was a great -- I mean, the educational system in Newton when I was in school, Time magazine called Newton High School the top high school in the country. We had a superintendent Charlie Brown, Charles Brown, and another guy Harold Howe. You know that name?

**Q:** I don't.

**A:** Well he was a -- either he was the superintendent or a principal. I think he was the superintendent before Charles Brown. You know that name.

**Q:** Yes.

**A:** Harold Howe was picked by JFK to be his head of the federal HEW, Health, Education, Welfare. That was Harold Howe, he came from Newton. Newton had this axis--I call it the

Cambridge-Newton axis. We had a lot of Harvard -- people in the Harvard School of Education teaching at Newton High School.

**Q:** Right.

**A:** Bob Zeeb, I don't know if you know that name, Robert Zeeb, he died a couple years ago. He was in the Newton education department. And there were many great teachers who came from Harvard and we had a tremendous school. We had eighty clubs in the school.

**Q:** That's amazing. And it looks like you participated in many of them.

**A:** Yeah. I ran the film festival -- this is before DVDs and we had a 16 millimeter projector.

**Q:** What were some of the films? Do you remember?

**A:** I had The Birds -- do I remember? I've got all the things here. The poster -- The Birds, Hunchback of Notre Dame, Horse Feathers, Sabrina, all kinds of...I've got the posters here somewhere.

**Q:** Did it influence the field you went into eventually?

**A:** I actually did go to work for Walt Disney. I think the poster's in there somewhere. I had a lot of posters and this Newtonite -- one of the Newtonite shows, "the birds is coming the birds is coming." So I spent a lot of time in the Newtonite office because I had to give the press releases and stuff. I also was the lead, male lead actor in a number of plays including Madwoman of Chaillot, which was the big senior play. I went to Northwestern in the summer between junior and senior year to do acting, acting program, that was fun. I went to NYU after that. I thought I was going to go into acting but I veered off into just liberal arts. I just wanted to learn all about

life, about everything. And I didn't want to do acting full-time because it was so much to learn. So I was an English major, History minor. Came back to Boston.

**Q:** So right after NYU you returned?

**A:** Yeah I went to law school, New England School of Law, for three weeks. I realized I was not gonna be a lawyer. So I dropped out of there and I sold insurance. Now I have to back up, my father was a hotshot salesman, he was a great salesman. He was one of the top jewelry salesman in the costume jewelry and was a wholesale jeweler, so I had that salesman part in me. My mother was more the intellectual side and my father was more sales, so I had both.

**Q:** Right. Did they grow up in Newton as well?

**A:** No, he grew up in Dorchester, she grew up in Brooklyn.

**Q:** Ah, okay.

**A:** There's me when I was three.

**Q:** That's wonderful with the old car.

**A:** The old Buick or something.

**Q:** We'll try to get some photos. And how did they end up in Newton? Since you were born--

**A:** My father moved to Brookline and he met my mother at a social camp in the Berkshires.

**Q:** Right, right.

**A:** And she was up from Brooklyn and he said, "Hey, come on up to Boston." And they dated and he asked her to marry her and blah blah blah, got married, she moved up here in 1940, left Brooklyn. She went to Erasmus Hall High School and Hunter College.

**Q:** Yes, sure, I grew up in Brooklyn I know it well.

**A:** My grandmother lived there till the 80's -- Grand Army Plaza. So she moved up here, 1940, they got married, they lived in Brookline and then they moved to Strathmore Road in Brighton, Cleveland Circle. Then they moved into a two family house on Comm. Ave. four doors up from BC, right on the corner of Crosby Road. I don't know if you know that area, there used to be an Esso station and I used to watch the marathon. I was on the--you know...I was three years old. But there were only 500 people in the marathon, it was very easy.

**Q:** You have those memories, that's amazing.

**A:** I don't forget anything, I remember everything.

**Q:** And then you were born when they lived on Cotton Street?

**A:** No, I was born in Newton. I was born in Newton-Wellesley Hospital, 1949, they were living on Comm Ave. Now they have three children and they needed a house, a bigger place, so they moved to Cotton Street in 1952. I was three. And that's that picture.

**Q:** That's really beautiful. Now do you remember anything about the neighborhood from that period?

**A:** Oh yeah, I remember everything! What do you mean, do I remember? I remember everything!

**Q:** What made a really big impression, any landmarks, any specific memories of that neighborhood?

**A:** The neighborhood, it was just beautiful. First of all, this is Tudor Village there, Tudor Village. And our house was distinctive because --I showed a picture of the house--

**Q:** Yes, beautiful.

**A:** --it was distinctive because, well, it was white. See it's white, it's not the red brick.

**Q:** Right, which a lot of the Tudors had.

**A:** It was white, it was very distinctive and we had a fence around it at one time. And it was wonderful. I just remember coming home from Ward School and "Oh, I'm home!" I had a warm home, my mother was always cooking, and she didn't work when we were growing up.

**Q:** Right, right.

**A:** We even had a maid for a while. My father did very well and he'd come home at like 5:30 in those days. He'd come home at 5:30. I had an older brother, an older sister, and me, I was the prince. I was the little prince baby, you know.

**Q:** Of course. Right, so--

**A:** So it was a beautiful, just a warm--and we had a great neighborhood of kids, a lot of kids my age. And it was hilly, I mean you'd go up and down these hills and either way--any way you walked it was interesting. The homes, the people--so many great people. We were very social and had a lot of friends. A lot of friends.

**Q:** Absolutely. In addition to schools, which you mentioned, were there any other places or landmarks that specifically you have great memories of?

**A:** Everything. You know, I wish--I had a map of Newton. I gave it to a friend of mine, because I wanted--I said, "Take a tour." He said- he comes by Centre Street on the way back--he's a DJ sometimes at WEEI, so he comes back through Newton right up past Cotton Street and I said, "Here, take a right on Cotton Street." And I gave him a map of Newton and said, "Here, you can see my house." So I left them, it's a beautiful map. But if you just look at a map, first of all, there are 12 or 13 or 14 villages.

**Q:** Yes.

**A:** And Newton is broken down into these villages. So people come into Boston and they want me to give them a tour.

**Q:** Of course, you know it well.

**A:** And I'm a tour guide, I'm a great tour guide. And they can't believe that Newton...they say, "Where's the big city?" And I said, "Well, it's a bunch of villages and it's like the tenth largest city in Massachusetts but you wouldn't know it by looking at it." But everything--Newton Commonwealth Golf Course is right behind Ward School. I used to see my camp director. We went to Camp Brunonia. Dave Mishel teed off in the forth tee right behind our elementary school.

**Q:** And did you spend a lot of time at the parks?

**A:** I spent a lot--yeah. Okay. I--throughout my life, look, when I was a kid, I was at Ward School Park.

**Q:** Yes, yes.

**A:** At Bigelow, Burr School. When I played I was on the tennis team and basketball team. I have my Bigelow "B" emblem here somewhere. Newton High School of course. And then I played a lot of tennis at Newton Centre playground. I also played tennis next to Newton South, I remember playing tennis there. I mean I played tennis a lot of places. I played golf at every--at Newton Commonwealth.

**Q:** Did Newton North have its tennis courts?

**A:** Yeah. Newton North was called Newton High School by the way.

**Q:** Right.

**A:** Even though there was a Newton South, they called it Newton High. They didn't call--decide to call it Newton North until years later.

**Q:** It was *the* high school.

**A:** It was *the* high school. So when we went--so this is why, Class of 1967, we call it Newton High School, even though it's Newton North.

**Q:** Right, right.

**A:** By the way, we--

**Q:** That is different.

**A:** Yes. Here's my Bigelow "B."



**Q:** Oh, fabulous. That's wonderful. I wonder if they still do that?

**A:** I don't know. We had, at the reunion, we had a little gift bag at the end, we gave out booklets, and we printed up every junior high school picture.

**Q:** These are amazing! How many--

**A:** So we had four junior high schools fed into Newton--Warren, Weeks, Bigelow, and Day. And we printed them up and it's mindblowing.

**Q:** Do you remember how large your junior high school was?

**A:** Yeah, ours was like--yeah, and as a matter of fact it's right on here, it was 300. No, ours was, Day was 203...Day was 203, Big--what's this Weeks or Warren? Weeks was three nine--351 or something. Warren was the biggest. And Bigelow was like a hundred and--Bigelow was the smallest.

**Q:** Which is nice. And how large was Newton North when you were there?

**A:** We had eight hundred and thirty kids in our class. Now that's not even the largest one, about 1964-65 they had about a thousand.

**Q:** Right.

**A:** That was the peak of the Baby Boom.

**Q:** Right. Right. And did you stay in touch with many people?

**A:** Are you kidding? Of course! That's why I was the co-chairman--

**Q:** It sounds like you are *the* guy.

**A:** I am the guy. With two other people I formed this committee for the reunion in January of 2016, and we finally started--our first committee meeting was in August of 2016. We had 15 committee meetings before the reunion. And the first thing I did is everybody--we had 12 people on our committee--everybody bring your Newtonian. So everybody brought...We started with "A," the picture "A," Kevin Abboud. We went through every picture.

**Q:** Amazing.

**A:** "Who knows Kevin Abboud? Okay, you find him. Who knows Ruth Phyllis Hadler?" This took us two hours to get through this.

**Q:** I imagine, you had that big class.

**A:** So then we had 12 people going out and finding the people and it wasn't easy. Well, there's Facebook, that made it on the one hand easier. On the other hand, the 20th reunion, there were so many parents who was still living at their houses we could call them up, but they're not there anymore.

**Q:** Right. No, no, no, no. That definitely has changed.

**A:** So I was responsible for either indirectly or directly getting 80 people to attend the reunion.

**Q:** Amazing. That is fabulous.

**A:** So I hold the record.

**Q:** Now, you mention playing tennis and sports, and being in plays and the film society.

Anything else that you remember--what people did when you were in school for fun in Newton?

**A:** Oh, in school?

**Q:** Well, not in school, but even outside, right.

**A:** I mean, I did a lot of stuff after--well school, I was mainly involved in school. I did a lot of things. I was in school, I went to Temple Israel, I went to Camp Brunonia. I had a big family, a social life. I mean, I was always busy.

**Q:** Yes, no, it sounds like that.

**A:** Then I went to NYU and then I had my New York experience. And then I came back and when I was at Babs--I went to Babson. Oh, so I sold insurance after dropping out of law school for about a year, and then I went back to Babson and got my MBA there. After that I went to work for Walt Disney, I went to Philadelphia, and then I moved back to Boston in 1976. And thought I was gonna work for Paramount Pictures, and it fell through. And I had an opportunity to start a business, a music management and booking agency for a couple of groups, mainly this group that we did some records--Stormin' Norman & Suzy. Norman Zamcheck, do you know that name, Zamcheck?

**Q:** I don't.

**A:** Norman Zamcheck is from Newton, he's two years older than me. He graduated from Exeter but he did go to Newton High School. And his father was a gastroenterologist, very famous, and...anyway, Norman was a great piano player and composer of original music. And he wanted

me to manage his band so I said--I took a flier, I said alright. And Suzy was an anomaly, she's kind of a combination of Janis Joplin and Sophie Tucker, and Bette Midler. She was wild--

**Q:** That's quite a combination.

**A:** Wild, yeah, great voice, bluesy voice, and they were great. And they were playing with these little bar bands in Cambridge and I took over the management and booking and within nine months I had them at Carnegie Hall.

**Q:** Fabulous.

**A:** And then we did this, Polydor records. So I did a lot of things in the music business. It was very exciting. And then I--let's see what happened...

I was always involved in politics, too. When I was at NYU I did a thesis, my politics class, on Robert Drinan's election in 1970, and I was on his campaign in the summer of '70. And then I was on various campaigns: Bill Carmen for Mayor, David Cohen when he ran for Alderman back in the '70s. He went to Ward School and I went to Ward School, so I would campaign out in front of Ward School.

**Q:** That's amazing.

**A:** I'm trying to think what--the progression--'70's, and then 1980 comes and Bob Drinan is forced out of--he has to leave Congress. You know about that?

**Q:** Yes.

**A:** The Pope. So Barney Frank throws his hat in the ring along with the 12 other guys. So I went down to the State House the day that it was announced on the radio. I said Barn- I went to his office, I was there before he was at 8 o'clock. I said "Barney, I'd like to volunteer for you." So he

put me in his office and I ran the phone bank. I was the phone operator for Barney Frank, his first campaign. I was his first volunteer.

**Q:** That's great. That's really amazing.

**A:** And I worked on a couple of his campaigns, I worked on a Mike Dukakis campaign and...let's see...And then I moved out of Newton, and then so I got out of politics.

**Q:** Right, right.

**A:** But I--anyway, so--

**Q:** But you have very strong roots.

**A:** Yeah. In 1972 I was on the Ward 7...Ward School...Ward 7 Democratic Committee that met at Grace Church. And they had a vote on who to send to the Massachusetts Democratic Convention in Worcester and they voted for me, along with a couple of other people. I was a delegate. So I do a lot of political things. It was fun, but that was just like a sidelight. I love politics, but it was--

**Q:** That sounds great. Now when you came back--

**A:** And also the arts. The arts--

**Q:** Yes, the arts. Like what kinds of things do you remember?

**A:** Well, movies. I'm a movie buff. I'm a great movie buff.

**Q:** Right, right. But anything specific to Newton? Any special events here that you can recall? You had all those things in school that sounded--

**A:** Actually recently--I don't know, five years ago, four or five years ago--I got Stormin' Norman & Suzy reunited after years and they played at the Newton Library. Who's here from the library? Yeah. Ellen Meyers booked me and...Actually, I have done a concert.

**Q:** Really? What kind?

**A:** Cole Porter. Was it Cole Porter or George Gershwin, I'm trying to think. It was Gershwin. It was George Gershwin. And I was a narrator, I have a great--I have a lot of people in the music business who I know, great singers and jazz musicians. So I booked this band, and I narrated George Gershwin's life. And it was a concert, it was sold out, it was great. So that was one concert and then I booked Stormin' Norman & Suzy a couple times with Ellen. And so...you know, I know Ellen pretty well. I knew Beth Purcell. You know Beth Purcell? Yeah, so. I knew her very well, and I still see her once in a while. What my current thing that I do now is I do these audio-visual lectures at senior centers and senior--I was just at Newton Senior Center.

**Q:** Is that how you heard about this?

**A:** Yeah that's--well, I'm not sure. I called up and it just turned out that Ilana picked up and--but she also booked me for this lecture that I did on Frank Sinatra. So I do these one hour audio-visual presentations. I do, you know, the whole lives and careers of these great singers and songwriters like Gershwin, Sinatra, Cole Porter, Judy Garland, Barbra Streisand. I have nine programs. I go all over Eastern New England. I've got like three or four shows a week I do and when I'm not doing the shows, on the days off, I will substitute teach at Wellesley High School or in this Needham school.

**Q:** And what do you teach there?

A: Well, I'm a substitute teacher, but--

Q: Right, right.

A: Usually English, Math, Social Studies.

Q: Okay. Because you said you had history also in your background.

A: I was a history--As a matter of fact, ten years ago I retired. I was in marketing sales. So I was out of--I was in the music business five years but couldn't make any money. It just, they never made it big. So I went and worked for a Newton company called Champagne Offset Company on Needham Street, no longer there, beautiful commercial printer. I was a commercial printing salesman for years, eight years, and then I worked for the Massachusetts Association of Realtors as their advertising director. And then when I--after I got married, my wife decided she wanted to move back to California, so that's when I left. And I was with trade groups for the next 15 years. I was a trade executive--trade association executive. Then I retired because I wanted to--and I was like in my late 50's. I decided, I want to go back to school and learn, you know, get a--I want to learn--I want to get a certificate to teach history. History in the public school system, which I did. I went to Framingham State. I got--I taught at four different school systems like these long term substitutes, four or five month maternity leaves. So I taught in Wayland, Weston, Belmont, and Needham.

Q: Oh my goodness!

A: So I taught US history, ancient history, different--it was great--European history. Never got a full-time job, which I won't go into, but it kind of--it was okay because I then got Stormin' Norman back together with Suzy and I got 'em on MIT radio. And I did a radio--they asked me

to do a radio show on Frank Sinatra, which I did. And after that somebody asked me to put together a lecture on Sinatra. This is about five years ago, which I--

**Q:** And this is the one you go around and do?

**A:** That's what I do now. So the last five years I've been building up this business as--it's like my post-retirement business.

**Q:** Well I think you need to teach about Newton history.

**A:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Q:** They need a course somewhere.

**A:** But I get good money for this so I gotta make sure...

**Q:** No, no, that's phenomenal. Now, each time you came back, did you notice big changes in Newton? The type of population, the areas--?

**A:** Well, the biggest thing was the McMansions. That freaked me out. I once--now David Cohen and I would--I was friendly with him. I'd go see him at his office every once in a while.

**Q:** Right.

**A:** And the one thing I think we disagreed on was these houses. I said, "Is there any way to stop this McMansionizing?" He said no. Basically, that's the way of the world. What can you--

**Q:** You must have seen a lot of development though over time.



A: Oh, yeah. But it's not, you know, it's not horrendous. What I don't like, I mean, stuff that impacts me, like this Newtonville project on Austin Street.

Q: Right, right.

A: I don't like that. Because it's taking away--it's a nice parking lot there, it's nice and open. Now you're gonna have...it's getting citified you know.

Q: Yeah, yeah it is. So did it get a lot bigger since you, you know, came back after all your travels? And the population, did that--

A: Chestnut Hill has exploded, you know that commercial section?

Q: Yes, and that wasn't there when you were growing up.

A: But you know, my motto is there's nothing more constant than change. You can't stop this. But if I--I used to go and view the aldermanic meetings here. I loved doing that, but I was--when I was living in Newton. I don't do that now, but...

Q: Right, right.

A: I would love to--Oh, okay. I did have an impact on Newton, a direct impact.

Q: Yes?

A: In 2002, I went to the opening hearings for renovating the old Newton High School.

Q: Right.

**A:** They had public hearings in the auditorium there. And they were saying, "Well we could--we're thinking of renovating." That was the idea, renovating it for 80 million dollars. Well, how about tearing it down and building a new one, that would cost a hundred million. It wasn't much difference. Maybe it was 70 and 100, I don't know. Anyway, I got up and gave this impassioned speech why they should tear down that old high school, and then I get a lot of applause, and that's what they did. They took my recommendation.

**Q:** They did, but I think it cost more than a hundred million.

**A:** It cost twice as much. I didn't know it was going to be double.

**Q:** It was. It was definitely double.

**A:** It's funny, when I--you know, David--that's why Cohen left office. He said to me in his office, he said, "Well if I ever get my..." I said, "You need to get your picture in the new Newton High School, just like Ted Mann has his picture in the library." He says "Well, if I ever get my picture there I'll have to change my name to Newton North."

**Q:** Right. Right. For sure. And when you were growing up was there a lot of diversity in Newton?

**A:** No.

**Q:** Did you find that has changed? What was the high school composition?

**A:** No. It's funny because when we went to the--we used the Newton High School print shop a lot for these photos and the booklet and everything. So there's one girl looking at the high school--Bigelow, and she didn't see any black people. "You were racist then." Well the point is, we didn't have any black people in the city. Maybe a couple--there were a couple at high school,

there were maybe five black kids in the high school, and maybe a couple of Asians and that was it.

**Q:** That was it. And no one was bussed in from different programs?

**A:** No, no. But we didn't know. I mean we just--that was basically....the composition to me when I went to Newton High School was Italian, Irish, Jewish, and WASP, those four, and one or two Asians and four or five Blacks and that was it, that was the diversity. We didn't know anything about diversity. That was not an issue then.

**Q:** No, no, no.

**A:** The issue became drugs and Vietnam, those were the issues. I mean drugs came right at the end of my high school career and then of course, Vietnam. I was--my senior year in Newton High School I went down to New York for the first peace march. No, those were the issues then.

**Q:** Right. And how did it impact--

**A:** And Timothy Leary by the way, Timothy Leary lived right next to my friend Norm Zamcheck, and as did Ram Dass. So they were very influential.

**Q:** Absolutely. And how did the Vietnam War influence or impact your high school class your senior year? Did you find that it impacted you?

**A:** Well...yeah. I mean that was--I remember going to that peace march in April and there was a couple of teachers who were, you know, trying to rev us up. But it didn't really really get big until my freshman year of college.

**Q:** Right, right.

**A:** I went to--did you ever hear of "Armies in the Night" by Norman Mailer?

**Q:** Yes.

**A:** I was there at the Pentagon. It was my freshman year in college. I went down to Washington and I was staring at these National Guard guys trying to prevent us from going into the--so I had to walk away from that.

**Q:** But there was an awareness when you were still here in Newton? No, but I mean even in high school.

**A:** Oh my gosh, of course. Oh yeah, of course! It was like--yeah. I mean...yeah.

**Q:** Now you've mentioned a lot of great memories from Newton. Was there anything kind of difficult that you remember being here or was it all fabulous?

**A:** It was all fabulous. No, I mean, there were difficult parts of my life, but I don't think they're necessarily connected to Newton. I think the most difficult part was having to leave Newton, because I loved being part of Newton.

**Q:** Right, right.

**A:** The political part and going on these tours. Do you know that name Barbara Tebow? She used to run these architectural walking tours of all the villages. She knew everything about architecture. I learned all about the cupolas and friezes.

**Q:** So in every village in Newton?

**A:** Well, I think I went on four or five with her, but I think I showed you those booklets.

**Q:** Yeah they're amazing. So do they still do it, the walking tours?

**A:** I don't think so.

**Q:** That might be something--

**A:** That's a great thing, yeah. I mean look at these books, they had the centennial of Newton, that's a great book. They had another book here. They put out a lot of great books. History of Newton schools, all right. I mean--

**Q:** These are really amazing.

**A:** I inundated myself and I started writing a book and then, I've got my notes somewhere, somewhere...

**Q:** Well you know it may be time to start again. How would you describe Newton and the area you grew up to someone who hadn't been here before? How would you describe it?

**A:** Newton is one of the great communities in America. I would just, you know, that's all I can say. I've been around, I've toured a lot of the United States. I've been to 44 states and I've seen a lot of this suburban areas like Westchester County, the Main Line in Philadelphia, Chicago area, San Francisco. I lived in San Francisco for four years. I lived in Mill Valley, Marin County. So I've seen a lot of these places, and they're all beautiful. They're all beautiful and they have all the geographical, topographical differences. But I would say Newton is more concerned about education than any of these other places. It's really steeped in education and steeped in history, steeped in politics. I mean it's Massachusetts, you know. There's nothing better than Massachusetts if you're a liberal. And if you believe in education and real facts and no fake

news, Newton is the best. I mean, it's tremendous. I met so many great--and people that came out of our--by the way, people who grew up in Newton are Leonard Bernstein. Jack Lemmon lived across the street from us before we moved in. Bette Davis went to Newton High School. Bobby Morris and of course from my class Deborah Border, she's now the head of--she's the CEO of the New York Philharmonic.

**Q:** That's great. A lot of distinguished graduates.

**A:** Yeah. Peter Guber. Peter Guber grew up around the street, around the corner from us and his father was very friendly with my father. They played golf together at Pine Brook Country Club. I knew a lot of people at these--Country Club, Camp Brunonia. I had a big social, huge social thing. My father was just, my father and mother would just make social craziness.

**Q:** Where was Camp Brunonia?

**A:** Casco, Maine, outside of Portland. It's no longer there but Peter Guber went there and he went to Ward School and...who else? Taymor, Julie Taymor of course.

**Q:** Yes! Yes. The Lion King.

**A:** Yeah. Andy Rosenberg, he was--I just saw him at the reunion. He's directed for NBC Sports, he directed the Olympics, the World Series, Wimbledon. He had a great career. A lot of interesting people.

**Q:** That's amazing.

**A:** We had people in every walk--scientists, lawyers, doctors, and they were all--a lot of the people who came to that reunion, I mean--I could write a book about every one of them.

**Q:** That's a thought.

**A:** It's a thought. Well not maybe a book, but like a little essay on each one. I was thinking of that.

**Q:** I think it's wonderful, because 50 years later to get 200 people who feel that way about Newton--

**A:** 250.

**Q:** 250? It's pretty amazing.

**A:** Actually it was 185 from the class, and we had 65 spouses.

**Q:** That's fabulous.

**A:** Yeah, it was...Well, you've got to realize there were 800 people in our class.

**Q:** Right.

**A:** We found 320, another 75 were deceased, and on top of that we know probably by statistics another hundred had probably died. So that leaves about 300 we couldn't find. But we did find 323, of those 185 came, so...

**Q:** That's really amazing.

**A:** It was pretty nice. It was really nice.

**Q:** This is amazing. There's so much rich material here. Is there anything else that you'd like to share? Highlights that you want to cover of growing up here, being here, special places, memories?

**A:** Well, of course it is the Garden City. It's just so gorgeous everywhere you look. The parks, the trees, the aqueducts, this--I've taken a lot of tours on lots of different things in Newton. It's fabulous. I try to explore and I've driven a lot around here a lot. I've driven all over Newton. I know a lot of the streets and I have a lot of friends in different places. So it's just an overwhelmingly great place to live and explore. And anytime people coming into Bo--friends of mine who come in from out of town, I give them a tour.

**Q:** Yes. Right, right.

**A:** First thing I do is give them a tour of Newton before I take them to Boston.

**Q:** Boston, or Cambridge, or...

**A:** Yeah, right. So...and the history is so fascinating, I love history, got my teaching degree in history and I love to go back to the 1600's, 1700's. It's fascinating. That's a whole other thing that I won't even talk about now. But it's just, the city itself is so gorgeous, the Garden City, you know...and the politics.

**Q:** Did your siblings end up staying here?

**A:** No. No. My sister got married and immediately moved to New York City. My brother moved to New York City and then moved to Minneapolis. I moved to San Francisco and Washington. I was out of state for 12 years. But most--except for those--well, I went to NYU, so there's 16 years, and I was in Philadelphia one year--17 years--so of my 68 years I'd say I've been in the Newton area for 50.



**Q:** That's great.

**A:** So I really try to keep in touch among--I don't get--the Newton Tab doesn't show up in my mailbox, but I go to Walgreens in Newton and I pick up the Newton Tab as much as I can.

**Q:** So that's how you keep up, and your friends who are still here. I'm sure there are still many people.

**A:** Yeah. It's--do almost basically all my shopping in Newton--Auburndale. I patronize everybody in Auburndale and go to Chestnut Hill, go to Newtonville. I mean, I just love walking around, getting out and walking around.

**Q:** No, it's wonderful. Even in the winter?

**A:** Yeah! Oh, even in the winter.

**Q:** Your enthusiasm is amazing. Is there anything else of the materials you brought, any specific memory you want to make sure we put in there for posterity?

**A:** Well, there were great teachers in Newton High School--

**Q:** Yeah. Anyone stand out?

**A:** Yes, John Harris.

**Q:** Okay. Tell us about--

**A:** John Harris was my English teacher in 12th grade. And he was brilliant and sardonic and compassionate. And we had this--I saw these like advertising in the back of this, as well as in memory and memorial tributes. Different people, "Oh, you know, the memory of Allen Goldberg or Madeleine McCann or Eddie McCann," and so forth. So I did in memory of various people--six people--one of them was--two of them were teachers, Bob Zeeb and John Harris. And John Harris was was my guiding light. I'll never forget 'All the King's Men.' He taught--I just--he pointed out so many great things in 'All the King's Men,' and Hamlet and you know, I really got excited. And then another woman who's an English teacher. She told me--Mrs. Goldberg--she told me about Northwestern. She'd gone there, so I applied there. I was the only person from the East Coast who was at this acting school at Northwestern. You know Shelley Long?

**Q:** Yes, of course!

**A:** She was in my class there. She went on to fame and fortune.

**Q:** But these were your mentors.

**A:** Yeah, John Harris--

**Q:** And then you went on to major in English.

**A:** Yeah! And then there was Roger Clark in junior high school. He was...he was a great English and social studies teacher. And then in Ward School Mr. Vito Sammarco. He's a legend. He died a number of years ago. He was a legend.

**Q:** Oh, so elementary school--

**A:** This is sixth grade. Sixth grade, and then sixth grade--went through sixth grade. And then Bigelow was seventh, eighth, and ninth.

**Q:** Right, right.

**A:** So this is Vito Sammarco. He's a legend. He was just so exciting and fun and...he was great. They now have a memorial, annual memorial dinner for him. Anyway, I went back. In 1980 I was kind of--I had left the music business and I wasn't sure where I wanted to go. So I called Ward School to try to find him and they said "Well he's the principal in Arlington at Brackett School." So I went over there I said, "Hi, you remember me?" No, of course not. "Bruce Hambro. I wanted to teach, I'd like to know about teaching." So he made me a teacher's aide. So I was a teacher's aide for him.

**Q:** Really?

**A:** Yeah, it was--I didn't go into teaching then, but for a semester I was a teacher's aide there. So that was fun. And then--

**Q:** Amazing connections.

**A:** Vito Sammarco, he was just--you ask anybody from that--whoever in his class they would say, "Oh, Vito!" Junior high school was Roger Clark. Senior high school was John Harris. Mr. Mechem was important, he was the principal of Newton High School, very important person.

**Q:** Right.

**A:** A lot of great teachers.

**Q:** Really amazing.

**A:** And politically, Bill Carmen was a great force. He ran for mayor three times and never won. He should have. Although he ran against Teddy Mann, that was--he wasn't going to beat Teddy Mann.

**Q:** Right. I knew Teddy well.

**A:** But he ran against Monte Basbas, and that was--Basbas was the guy who tore down--the greatest crime in Newton history was tearing down the old high school. You know about the old high school? There were three buildings, do you know about that?

**Q:** No.

**A:** You don't know? My god--

**Q:** You know we're going to be winding up, so we could end with that.

**A:** It was a gorgeous, gorgeous--and everybody, everybody who went to our reunion says that that was a crime beyond compare. Three beautiful buildings. They were old, but it was like a college campus. And Monte Basbas--they decided to tear the whole thing down. Here's building two - that was just building two.

**Q:** Look at that! Beautiful. Really a campus.

**A:** That was just building two! Anyway, so there were three buildings. They tore them down and they built that horrible thing on Lowell Street, which was a monstrosity. And the people who built it--the architects were--the builders were just--had done nothing but prisons before. And so

it looked like a prison, it was disgusting. And so when it came time for those public hearings, I gave my two cents worth. So that was my--

**Q:** Well you did something. You really influenced the new building.

**A:** I did something. Yeah. Even though it was 200 million dollars, I didn't--it wasn't my overrun.

**Q:** No, no. Bruce, that's amazing. You know this is really fabulous. Thank you so much for taking the time to do this. I think we need several interviews to get all your materials. These are really amazing. And I wasn't kidding about teaching a course about Newton history.

**A:** I'd love to.

**Q:** I think it would be amazing.

**A:** I'd love to.

**Q:** Maybe a special program somewhere, really. Newton Historical Society, maybe they already have that. This has been wonderful.

**A:** I'd love to do that. You know, Duschka Scott and Susan Abele--I used to talk to them a lot, but it was tougher when I moved out of Newton. And now that I have this new business under control, I think I could now look back to maybe developing a course or something on Newton.

**Q:** I think it would be amazing.

**A:** I could do that even if I'm not a Newton resident?

**Q:** Yes! You are a Newton resident! You always will be.

A: Emeritus.

Q: You are. Really, amazing. Thank you for sharing all of this--

A: My pleasure!

Q: --and being part of this oral history project of Newton Talks. Really great sharing with you.

A: Thank you.

Q: Thank you so much.

A: You're welcome.

Q: Do we want a picture of some of these fabulous materials?

END OF INTERVIEW